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ABSTRACT

A study was designed to explore spiritual teachers of art and to illuminate the characteristics they share. A spiritual artist/teacher is defined as one who exhibits a deep involvement with aesthetic experiences which are personal, sustained, and purposeful. This research focused on data from in-depth interviews with higher education art professors with diverse spiritual beliefs that reflect the participants' intent, inspirations, and efforts expended in the creation and teaching of art. The portraits revealed three significant conclusions: (1) there were common elements in the participants' artistic development due to a growing awareness that led to a unity; (2) there was a connection between aesthetic and spiritual experiences within each participant revealed in his or her mode of working; and (3) the artist/teachers manifested their spirituality in teaching art in their own distinct ways, such as through extraordinary caring for their students and creating opportunities for students to consider questions about their own spirituality. (Contains 28 references.) (Author/BT)

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THE SPIRITUAL LIVES OF ARTIST/TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study was designed to explore spiritual teachers of art and to illuminate the characteristics they share. A spiritual artist/teacher is defined as one who exhibits a deep involvement with aesthetic experiences that is personal, sustained, and purposeful. This research focused on data from in-depth interviews that reflect the participants' intent, inspirations, and efforts expended in the creation and teaching of art.

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THE SPIRITUAL LIVES OF ARTIST/TEACHERS

Introduction

What we have learned about the educational needs of children and young adults is vast; however, their spirituality is rarely examined. Coles (1992) studied the spiritual lives of young children, many of whom were in painful situations that required intervention, and found that their deepest inner thoughts were often made visible through visual representations. He explains that through art a child has "a chance to make a personal statement, to say something that matters to one's heart and mind and soul" (p. 6). What life experiences might influence the content of children's art? Coles concludes, "Teachers' comments, lessons learned at home or in the classroom, get connected not only to a child's vision of the world—his sense of things, his moral and even political viewpoint—but to the vision offered in drawings and paintings" (p. 29). Art educators are situated in a unique position to encourage students' connections between the inner self and art making. This study attempts to provide insight into creating curricula that allows for and forges these connections.

Because this study focuses on spirituality, it is important to provide a working definition of the spiritual aspect of our lives, specifically within the framework of teaching in a diverse society and using language that has universal application. Spirituality, as defined by Van Ness (1996), is "the embodied task of realizing one's truest self in the context of reality" (p. 5) and is manifested through an inquiry of our personal understanding of the nature of our existence, whether through acts of art making, the resulting products, or the discussion of spirituality in these acts and products, and the expression of spirituality through language. A spiritual person is consistently

devoted to creating, honoring, and acting out those aspects of the self that are reflective of higher values. A spiritual person is also ultimately concerned with a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in her or his life and seeks to share this with others. This belief helped frame the philosophical grounding for this study, which ultimately focuses on a conceptual triad: spirituality in the person, spirituality in the creation of art, and the manifestation of this spirituality in teaching art.

A discussion of spirituality in teaching is a fairly recent phenomenon. Holistic educator, Richard Brown (1998-99) writes about the importance of seeing what educators do in a new light: "Teaching methods and activities supplement our natural intelligences but do not substitute for genuine teaching encounters that engage our whole being and reflect who we are" (p. 70). The key to spirituality in teaching is to let go of our usual habits and open ourselves "to the sacredness of ordinary teaching and learning" (p. 73), according to Brown. Kessler (1998-99) believes there are many educators who feel the urgency to discuss spiritual wellness in light of "a decade of headlines about 'a generation at risk,' the void of spiritual guidance and opportunity in the lives of teenagers...contributing to self-destructive and violent behavior" and believes that this behavior is indicative of a "search for connection and meaning and an escape from the pain of not having a genuine source of spiritual fulfillment" (p. 49). Noddings calls spirituality in education a "longing for the sacred" (Halford, 1998-99) while others simply call for an atmosphere of respect (Wesley, 1998-99). Suhor writes, "Spirituality grows in classrooms when teachers see themselves as agents of joy and conduits for transcendence, rather than merely as licensed trainers or promoters of measurable growth" (p. 16).

Moffett (1994), in his book about spirituality and education, called for a change in our present concept of education "by *spiritualizing education*...as a rallying call for reform. It is intended to include everyone; however they feel about other worlds or otherworldliness. It brings to our daily efforts to improve our life in this world a sorely needed focus on being good for one another....It invites us to seek commonalities beneath commonplaces, for the sake of mind as well as morality"(p. 19). In his chapter, "Education to Transform Consciousness," Moffett (1994) discusses the "primacy of the arts." He believes that the arts should hold a much more prominent role in the curriculum because he sees art making as giving "*full play* to one's potential" (p. 73).

Palmer (1998) describes teaching itself as a spiritual act. He explains, "Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together" (p. 2). Palmer also believes that "Connections made by good teachers are not in their methods, but in their hearts—meaning heart in the ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self" (p. 11). Spirituality is not something new to be added to the curriculum; rather, it is simply waiting to be revealed and modeled in our teaching behavior through our choices for discussion, and as art educators, through the opportunities we provide for students' visual expression of their inner life experiences.

What about the problems we face in contemporary society, with a multitude of religions, belief systems, and our need to respect various perspectives? Coleman (1998) writes that bringing only dogma and doctrines to the discussion will spell failure. To him, "Success requires an intuitive receptivity and an existential posture—one that engages the

total self, i.e., intellect, heart, and will" (p. 40). For a teacher to bring this success to her or his classroom requires, as Coleman suggests, bringing one's "whole being" to teaching, in order to be in a position to "affirm the integrity of the other" (p. 40). This particular stance allows us to share our common human qualities and respect our differences simultaneously, and art could possibly be one way that we can find ways to develop empathy with others who are different from ourselves. Burton (2001) states, "Because artistry is embedded in our shared humanness, its outcomes are trans-cultural and trans-historical and permit public discourse and conversations across natural boundaries and time" (p. 36).

Methods for Researching Spirituality in Teaching

Data for this study was acquired through in-depth interviews, which were then transcribed, quoted, and interpreted. The methodological grounding for in-depth interviewing came from a mixture of Schutz's phenomenology (1970), essentialist methodology (Witz, Goodwin, Hart, and Thomas 2001), and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) believe that a combination of methodologies adds "rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (p. 5) and the methods for this study reflect this goal. Essentialist methodology, which is well-suited to the study of teaching and spirituality, "(1) attempts to see the nature and essence of the phenomenon under study appearing in the experience and consciousness of each participant, and then (2) endeavours to obtain more general insights regarding the phenomenon by trying to see an essence when looking across cases" (Witz et al., p. 195). An understanding of the participant by the researcher is achieved through "sustained attempts to share empathetically and sympathetically the individual's feeling, state of

mind and past experience, both during the interview and in many re-hearings of the tapes afterwards" (p. 198). More importantly, when considering the purpose of this particular study, I found the method by Witz et al. to be "ideally suited to explore motivation, spirituality, and social awareness as these appear in the past and present subjective experience and consciousness of the individual, forming part of the individual's self-understanding and world-view" (p. 198).

Grounded theory, defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990), serves to replace theories and concepts held by the researcher with concepts of the people being observed, which at first are considered provisional. They state, "Each concept earns its way into the theory by *repeatedly* being present in interviews, documents, and observations in one form or another—or by being significantly absent" (p. 7). Charmaz (2000) reconsiders grounded theory in light of postmodernism and explains how, a decade later, researchers envision this same stance: "A constructivist grounded theory assumes that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them" (p. 521). In this study, the themes that consistently reoccurred in the quotes of the participant were carefully reconsidered before they were included in the analysis, and then checked for accuracy with the participant during the interview process as well as during the writing phase of the study. This became a construction of the participants' realities as I understood them and with confirmation from the participants.

The data was compiled and interpreted, then formed into a written narrative through the use of portraiture. As a method in qualitative research, portraiture was developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997). This method "resists the tradition-

laden effort to document failure" (p. 144) often seen in positivist methods; rather it is useful in "illuminating the complex dimensions of *goodness*" (p. xvi), which are not "documents of idealization or celebration" (p. 144) but an attempt to interpret and describe the perspectives and experiences of the people studied (p. xv). Lawrence-Lightfoot writes about the portraiture process in this way: "Through documentation, interpretation, analysis, and narrative, we raise the mirror, hoping—with accuracy and discipline—to capture the mystery and artistry that turn image into essence" (p. xvii).

The participants in this study are higher education art professors with diverse spiritual or religious beliefs and diverse studio backgrounds; art education (all studio media), painting, and Japanese aesthetics. Each participant was interviewed for at least ten hours during an eighteen month period, as well as observed teaching when possible. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and included as quotes in each portrait. Images of art work created by each participant were also included as part of the evidential component of the portraits.

Data Analysis

Because I believe that if a person is spiritual in his or her approach to one aspect of life, then it might be assumed that he or she would be spiritual in all other aspects of his or her thinking, beliefs, and ultimately, actions, I pursued questioning that illuminated these characteristics in the participants in this study. The phenomenon explored in each teacher/artist, "aesthetic spirituality," is defined in two parts as: (1) a strong spirituality at the core of one's self, and (2) a developed sense of the connection between the inner self and the person's philosophy of creating and teaching art. Various aspects of the phenomenon studied include: (a) spirituality manifested in the person's art making; (b)

the process of self-actualization and fulfillment from creating and teaching art; (c) the manner in which this spirituality permeates the essence of the teacher/artist; and, (d) the manner in which the spiritual teacher's involvement with aesthetic and spiritual experiences relates to a concern for his or her students.

Preliminary analysis of the interview tapes led to the writing of portraits or life stories of each participant. When looking across all three cases, it became evident that each participant, in varying degrees of intensity, experienced a new awareness of making connections between an inner spiritual core and the outward manifestation of this spirituality in both her and his art and teaching. It was discovered that although each participant came from different spiritual groundings, there were themes that emerged that were part of what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) called "universal patterns" (p.14). These patterns include an increasingly integrated sense of unity in the life of each person, and a stronger and more subjective articulation of the awareness they had experienced. Witz et al. (2001) suggest that when studying spirituality, research methods must reflect a process of understanding the participants' life experiences, personal histories, attitudes, and subjective reflections about their lives. This methodology also advances the idea that in the process of researching a phenomenon, "to understand the phenomenon truly, completely, with everything in proportion, and as a unity, we must understand it as a part of the individual's self, as that comes across in direct communication and interaction in the interview" (p. 204). The methodology and resulting portraits reveal that the "subjective reflections" of the participants can indeed provide a unified picture of each person's spiritual essence as it is manifested in all aspects of her or his character and actions.

The Portraits: Major Insights

The life story of each teacher reveals experiences that might resonate with any reader who has ever considered the mission of her or his teaching to be concerned with providing opportunities to help students shape a vision of how they would like to live their lives. By listening to the voice of these artist/teachers, it is possible that insight can be gained into how art teachers, and perhaps teachers in other disciplines, form a personal philosophy of teaching through the lens of their own spiritual connections to their art and their students.

At the end of the portrait writing, several major insights emerged from the research. The first insight was the discovery of common elements in the participants' evolution, such as evidence of a growing awareness or a period of deeper connection to their inner lives, which led to a unity that confirmed assumptions posed by the methodology. This evolution was manifested not only in the art products the artist/teachers created but in the process, or way of working, undertaken by each person. A deeper grasp of each person's essence was found through an understanding of his or her art work as the reflection of a combination of ability and spiritual impulse. A critical view of the evolution of each person's artistic development provided the framework for this understanding.

The second major insight consisted of a similarity between the aesthetic experiences and spiritual experiences described by the artist/teacher participants. This appeared to be an essential component of both participants' mode or way of working and was connected to the sense of unity the participants ultimately felt. There is a long

standing discussion of the relationship between aesthetic and spiritual experiences in the literature, which confirmed my understanding of this phenomenon in each participant.

The third major insight, which has implications for research on teaching in art education and other disciplines, was the fact that each artist/teacher's view of teaching reflected his or her spiritual convictions. For the participants, a philosophy of teaching was developed through a process of self realization, understanding what teachers in their own lives had meant to them, and a view of art making that included spiritual meaning. They all stated that learning skills from their art teachers had helped them achieve a sense of confidence in their art making; in addition, this knowledge helped propel them into meaningful art making. All of the artist/teachers then concluded that their teaching philosophies grew out of these positive experiences and led to a sense of personal fulfillment in their own teaching.

It should be pointed out that the degree to which a sense of unity, spirituality, and purpose in life was manifested through teaching or art making was uniquely different for each participant. Finding commonalities among the participants is not intended to suggest any generalizations about the spiritual experiences described in the portraits. A personal feeling of resonance propelled my continued questioning, and the writing became a construction of the participants' experiences I believed would resonate with others.

A Growing Awareness Toward Unity

In looking closely at the common elements found in each portrait, it became evident that the participants had experienced similar periods in their lives that could be characterized as either gradual changes or major turning points, where a sense of deeper understanding and awareness of this depth brought each person to a higher level of

spirituality. This higher level was reflected in a distinct and stated feeling of becoming unified in purpose, both in the creation of visual art and in teaching, by each participant. This sense of unity was realized in various ways, such as through a confidence in their abilities, self-actualization as a result of finding a career or goal that merged their inner and outer lives, as well as a sense of completeness and accomplishment. One participant describes this unification in the following quote:

> It was like everything that I had ever been about came together, I mean all of my training in art and my beliefs...I was thinking when the spirit blows, you just go with the spirit...it's just kind of letting go, all right, let's just have faith that this will work out. (HB Interview I: 19)

He also explains the concept of integration:

> To me, the beauty and the aesthetic come from the fact that all parts are relating well, there is a beauty in that...the beauty comes from the way all of those parts go together to say that, the way the paint is applied, the way the forms are arranged in space...it all comes together and makes a beautiful thing and it is very satisfying. (HB Interview II: 13-14)

This idea that all parts are relating well ultimately became the confirmation this artist/teacher needed to recognize a feeling of unity or integration in his own life. He also realized that he had learned how to "let go" of consciously controlling his art, which then became "an integrated activity" (HB Interview II: 17-18). This unity propelled him into a philosophy of teaching art that focused on the well-being of the student, including both the intellect and heart, which he had learned were both equally important in art making.

Another participant, a Japanese woman, had huge cultural barriers to overcome before achieving a sense of confidence and freedom that led to a unity, all created from an "awakening" she experienced. She grew up in a culture that sees art, life, and spirituality as an undifferentiated aspect of one's being. She simultaneously became aware of her abilities to teach Japanese art along with finding her own unique way of teaching students in a culture so different from her own. This occurred after taking Japanese art classes taught by a tea master here in America. Her growing awareness peaked in what she called an awakening to the totality of Japanese culture inside of her. From that point on, she experienced a gradual evolution of artistic expression in Japanese art and her teaching that resulted in a sense of unity. She used the words core, essence, spiritual element, all of which seemed to describe her feelings about an essential quality of her experiences. She explains it in this quote:

> I think that the essence of tea ceremony, of flower arranging, of all traditional Japanese art, and not just Japanese art, is that unless you have your spiritual element in it, it is nothing. The core is the same, the more you get into what the essence is, the medium, what you are dealing with might be different, flowers or tea, or whatever; the essence is the same thing. The core is the spiritual essence. *Your spiritual element runs through whatever you are doing.* So, when you are teaching every year and trying to improve your teaching, you study and research and you get reactions from students, and then you are getting into the core. (KG Interview V: 7)

Her deepening awareness eventually led her to what she called a "higher level" in her life and her teaching. As she considered her own spiritual element a crucial component in her

work, her philosophy of teaching became a focus on the *core* of the student, which she respects as a spiritual aspect to be nurtured during her encounters with students through art experiences, ultimately creating what she called "good humans."

Aesthetic and Spiritual Experiences

The second major insight from the research that seemed to be shared between the participants was a similarity between aesthetic experiences and spiritual experiences. From the sense of unity they found, and the drive to continue on this path, it was evident that this connection was being felt. From this perspective, the similarities between aesthetic and spiritual experiences are not only embodied in the finished art product or activity, but in the deeply felt changes that occur when spirituality is manifested through the creation of art. This seemed to create to sense of peace, unity, self-actualization and fulfillment in the participants, as they described during their interviews. There first existed a movement toward unity through awareness of a spiritual core, which was expressed in the actions of the person who revealed this spirituality. The artist/teachers all possessed this awareness and were operating at a level of complete integration of aesthetic and spiritual impulses in their art and teaching.

If one considers these experiences as part of a journey or path many people take, then it is possible that each person could be at a different place on this path, where these aspects have different meanings based on how one experiences spirituality and one's cultural situation. It is evident that "aesthetic spirituality" as a concept has been shown to be a distinct and recognizable aspect of a spiritual artist's life. Dewey (1934) explains the connection between aesthetic and spiritual experiences as,

> "That feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense esthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond the world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. (p. 195)

Martland (1998) also writes about the similarity of spiritual and aesthetic activities in that they both propel one to move from "an inherited way of seeing things, from an inherited structure of reality" into a reconstruction of a world with "new fundamentals" (p. 259). This movement can be life saving for many who are feeling alienated from authentic ways of knowing and being, and lacking spiritual understanding.

Teaching and Spirituality

While the manifestation of teaching and spirituality was driving much of the inquiry, it was nevertheless surprising to discover that spiritual teaching can actually take many forms. One of the artist/teachers describes her particular way of feeling this spirituality:

> Through my teaching, if they can recognize it, they can feel that, it is the beginning of the human senses. I say to them, "You are human, you see, hear, smell, plus to be a human you have to have a heart, an empathetic heart, to feel for others. (KG Interview II: 1-2)

The braveness with which she overtly practiced her beliefs in her teaching was what was so striking; yet, Zen Buddhism is so interwoven with Japanese arts, it would be unlikely that one could teach this art form without an embedded spiritual meaning. Perhaps, in

some ways, this confirms the obvious; I would argue that this participant is teaching with an unusually strong sense of spiritual commitment. She spoke often of her mission in teaching as originating in her heart and moving toward a desire to create peace in the world through tea ceremony, even if this meant touching one student at a time. Her hard work, as well as her unending hope in light of tragic world events that concerned her deeply, makes her a model for others to follow.

Another of the participants recognized during the interview process that his artistic development was fueled by the encouragement he received from good teachers throughout his education and this directly influenced his teaching philosophy. He spoke highly of his experiences in teaching, and his love for his students was shown in ways that included a belief in high expectations for them as individuals, a respect for where they were in their own artistic and mental development, and a concern for preparing them for the profession of teaching. He could easily transfer all of the knowledge as well as love he had acquired from his teachers, and the ideal of "doing one thing well," which promoted a feeling of self-confidence that he felt could be taught to his students.

One of the participants spoke of having been told early in life that she possessed a "gift" for art making. Because she was hearing this from an art teacher whom she deeply respected, she began to see her work in a more serious light. Ultimately, when she realized how much she loved to teach art to college students, she described her abilities in teaching a "gift" as well.

The concept that teaching can be a spiritual act was confirmed in the participants in a manner that was personal to them, and reflected their own worldviews and/or spiritual beliefs. The artist/teachers experienced a type of journey, in which they searched

for ways for their art and teaching to express more closely the spiritual nature of their inner lives. In many ways, this journey has not stopped for either artist/teacher, since the spiritual drive seemed to include a never-ending re-evaluation of one's response to life in light of what one values the most. They all expressed an appreciation for teachers who had been instrumental in helping them realize their potential. This confirmed what many other art educators have also stated—that the amount of exposure and opportunity the learner experiences in art instruction can directly affect the likelihood of a sustained and deep involvement in the art. More importantly, however, was the *nature* of the commitment their teachers expressed to them and the *manner* in which they mentored these young artists, who talked frequently about the love and respect they felt for and received from their teachers. Eisner (2001) wrote,

> When relationships are right, and the comments made suit the moment, when a child is touched and an adolescent supported, the student may come away from the art room with a memory that he or she will cherish throughout his or her life. It is in this sense that a teacher affects eternity. (p. 10)

Implications for Art Education

It is my belief that the artist/teachers we educate must be allowed and encouraged to develop a more profound connection between their spiritual core, their art, and their teaching. We need to start at the beginning, in higher education, where theory is formulated and practice discussed. We should examine ways in which we can create what Greene (1995) calls a "resistance to meaninglessness" (p. 6). It is by engaging in research that provides introspection, insight, and understanding from the lives of artist/teachers

and how they impact their students that educators can begin to formulate new approaches in teacher education.

We return full circle to the literature that confirms the undeniable value of art in the lives of children and young adults. Coles (1990) believes that children are very capable of expressing their spirituality in their art: "Children try to understand not only what is happening to them, but why; and in doing that, they call upon the religious life they have experienced, the spiritual values they have received, as well as other sources of potential explanation" (p. 100). In his research, Coles found that children confront the same questions adults confront. He writes, "How young we are when we start wondering about it all, the nature of the journey and of the final destination" (p. 335).

The implications of this research are predominantly focused on the early stages of teacher education, when pre-service teachers might devote time to reflect on their own inner lives, make connections between art and spirituality, and ultimately manifest this in their teaching. Goodson (1981) states, "In understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is" (p 69). Goodson explains that studying teachers' lives can help us understand what direction our children will be led when he writes, "It would seem that professional practices are embedded in wider life concerns. We need to listen closely to their views on the relationship between "school life" and "whole life" for in that dialectic crucial tales about careers and commitments will be told" (p. 16).

A spiritual approach to education can provide one way of thinking about the learning environment and the curriculum that both explicitly and implicitly forms the foundation of what is taught and how it is taught. Our values are imbedded in the

curricular decisions we make. Is it possible to create a classroom where children's inner lives are valued? I believe it is; however, the teacher must see spirituality as part of the child's life, one aspect of the whole person consisting of heart, mind, and body. Educators in all disciplines, and especially in art education, must recognize the spiritual lives of children, how this aspect of their experience can be honored and represented in secular settings, and in what form it will be encouraged.

Palmer (1993) recognizes spirituality in higher education teaching as an effort to avoid creating students and future citizens who Palmer calls "manipulators," which occurs "when our knowledge leaves the inner self unexamined, for it is there that the drive for dominance arises" (p. 37). This dominance is at the root of many problems in the world today and educators can change this tendency by directing attention toward the commonalities we all possess. Dissanayake (2000) believes than an "intimate" art can create a bridge between people. She states, "If it is recognized that the arts everywhere address the same human concerns that have been part of the human condition for millennia, then we have a means of bringing people together rather than dividing them" (p. 203).

While the function of education has always been the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next, what is forgotten is that educators can only make education life-changing for students if teachers live and act in a spiritual dimension. Our children will begin to realize that finding layers of meaning in every act of art making ultimately becomes a way of learning that can be seen as a journey, one that looks for the sacred in our everyday world. Spirituality is the place in our hearts that holds all of the questions about our purpose in the world and it is reflected in our actions. This approach

recognizes a celebration of individuality, growth in awareness of the basic universal truths of love, a commitment to justice, and a respect for personal experience. This challenges today's tendency toward relativism, and in fact, moves quickly away from it. Greene (1995) provides a critique on how the arts can help us strive for change in the classroom, as well as the world.

> We who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to live as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we all share. It is simply not enough for us to reproduce the way things are...For me, as for many others, the arts provide new perspectives on the *lived world*...it may only be when we think of humane and liberating classrooms in which every learner is recognized and sustained in her or his struggle to learn how to learn that we can perceive the insufficiency of bureaucratized, uncaring schools. And it may be only then that we are moved to choose to repair or to renew. (pp. 3-5)

What are the ways this research might inform practice? That has been a difficult question to answer, due to the complexity of human nature and the diversity of spiritual perspectives. Some educators believe we are in trouble with our present approach to liberal education, which often marginalizes those students who have different goals from the more technologically savvy students in our schools. One thing is certain to Noddings (2002): there are ways to change our teaching to help solve some of the problems we now face. She concluded,

> *Give at least part of every day to themes of care.* We should discuss existential questions—including spiritual matters—freely. Moreover, we need to help

> students learn to treat one another ethically by giving them practice in caring....We should encourage a way of caring for animals, plants, and the environment that is consistent with caring for humans, and we should also encourage caring for the human-made world....There is nothing mushy about caring. It is the backbone of human life. (pp. 100-101)

Art is one of the vehicles for providing the discussions Noddings requires in a new type of classroom. Cunningham (1998) states, "The life of art is not only a quest but a communication about the process of the quest for that deeper feeling of presence" (p. 11). The unique opportunities for a quest of this nature should become the grounding for art educators as they form their philosophies of teaching and write their curricula.

Future Research

Presently, there seems to be a flurry of activity surrounding spirituality, as evidenced by the recent conference in New York City, sponsored by the School of Visual Arts, and titled, "The Arts and the Spiritual." Keynote speakers included Peter London, who provided the most relevant words regarding the place of research on spirituality in art education. His paper was "a reexamination of the 'First World' countries' domination of the international conversation about what is good, proper, and full education in the arts, given the absence of the spiritual dimension in their worldview, and in stark contrast to the significant role the spiritual dimension plays in art and art education held by traditional societies" (2001). He called for this very conversation in which I am engaging to be brought to national conferences for art educators, where he noticed it to be sorely absent. What better way to learn about art made by people of all cultures than through experiencing what is of spiritual value to them, what they honor and treasure?

In the future, it would also be helpful to research the ways in which students respond to spiritual artist/teachers who not only provide content in their courses but act as catalysts for inspiring personal growth and making connections to ones' experiences. What this research hopefully provides for the field of art education in particular, but also anyone involved in teaching, is a critical eye for ways to teach in a holistic fashion by developing lessons, projects or discussions that create more introspection, caring, and focus on human experiences that create bonds among all of us. This requires courage on the part of teachers to recognize spirituality in their own lives and then their students' lives and help direct this concern into a path for the good of the community and society as a whole.

I suppose that in each act of teaching there is hope, faith, and idealism about the intrinsic worth of this activity. And, possibly the theories and practical ways in which this research informs our field are still emerging. My vision for art education is that we begin the conversation. I believe that teaching art is more than *what* we know, it is also about teaching others to find out *how* they would like to live their lives, and in what kind of world they wish to live.

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